

(12) **United States Patent**
Goren

(10) **Patent No.:** **US 9,411,371 B1**
(45) **Date of Patent:** **Aug. 9, 2016**

(54) **SUPPORT STRUCTURE ASSEMBLY FOR SUPPORTING A PORTABLE COMPUTING DEVICE**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **14/688,498**

(22) Filed: **Apr. 16, 2015**

(51) **Int. Cl.**

G06F 1/16 (2006.01)
B65D 85/00 (2006.01)
A45F 3/04 (2006.01)
A45F 5/00 (2006.01)
H01R 25/00 (2006.01)
G06F 1/26 (2006.01)
H04N 9/31 (2006.01)
A45F 3/14 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **G06F 1/1632** (2013.01); **G06F 1/1662** (2013.01); **G06F 1/1688** (2013.01); **G06F 1/266** (2013.01); **H01R 25/006** (2013.01); **H04N 9/3141** (2013.01); **A45F 3/14** (2013.01); **A45F 2003/148** (2013.01); **A45F 2200/0525** (2013.01); **G06F 1/163** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC **G06F 1/1632**; **G06F 1/163**; **A45F 3/14**; **A45F 2003/142**; **A45F 2003/144**; **A45F 2003/146**; **A45F 2003/148**; **A45F 2200/0525**
USPC **361/679.03**, **679.41–679.45**; **224/259–266**, **270**; **206/320**; **710/303**, **710/304**

See application file for complete search history.

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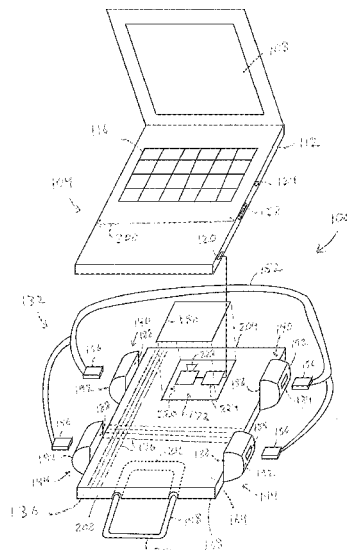
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A support structure assembly for supporting a portable computing device includes a harness assembly, a platform, two first step structures, and a support bar. The harness assembly includes a strap and a plurality of connectors extending from the strap. The platform defines a first support surface configured to support the computing device. The two first step structures extend from the platform and are located at opposite ends of the first support surface. Each first step structure defines (i) a first socket formed in a first outer step surface and configured to releasably retain a connector of the plurality of connectors, and (ii) a second support surface opposite from the first outer step surface, non-coplanar with the first support surface, and configured to support the computing device. The support bar is connected to the platform.

10 Claims, 14 Drawing Sheets



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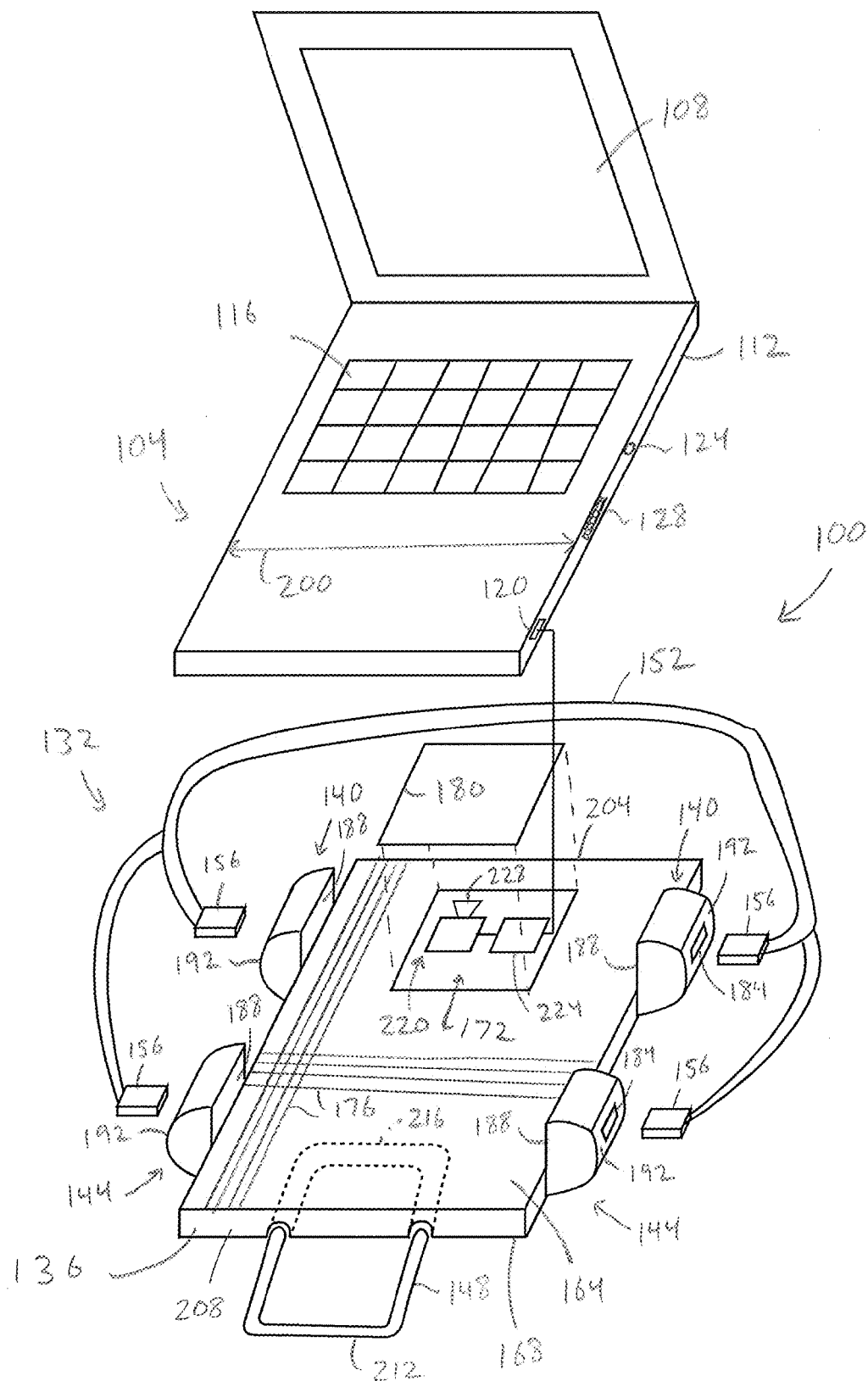


FIG. 1

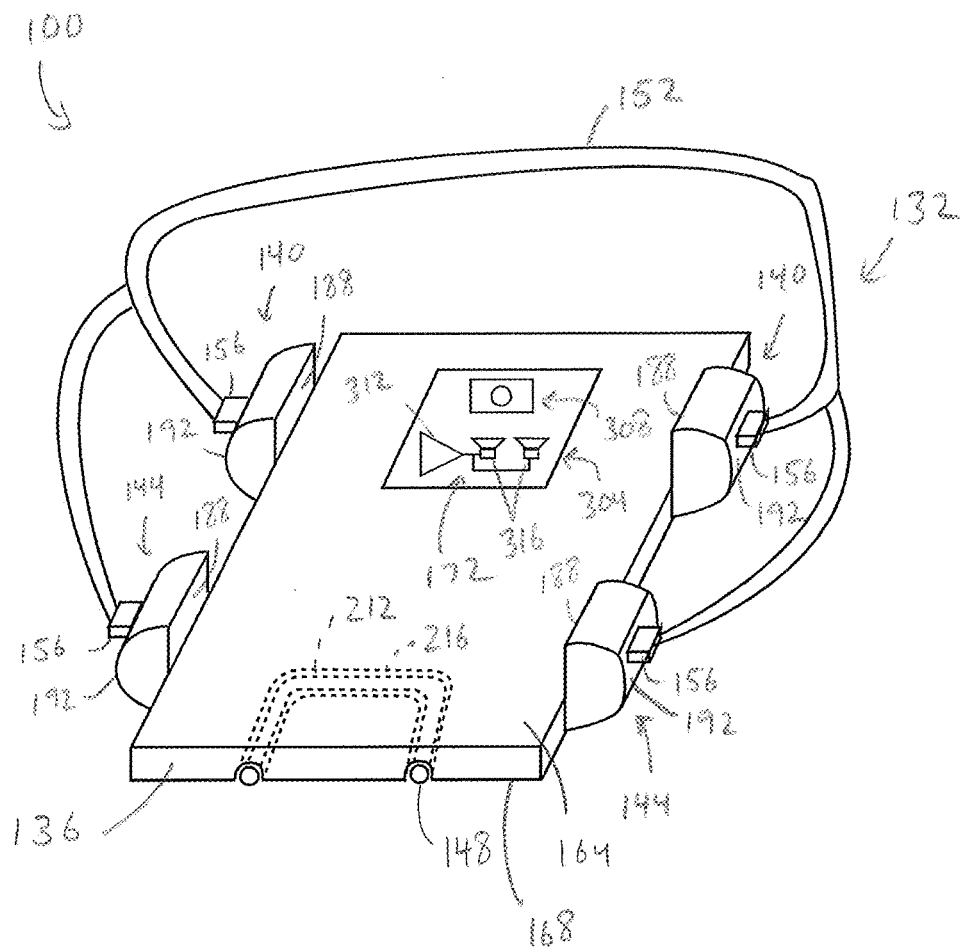


FIG. 2

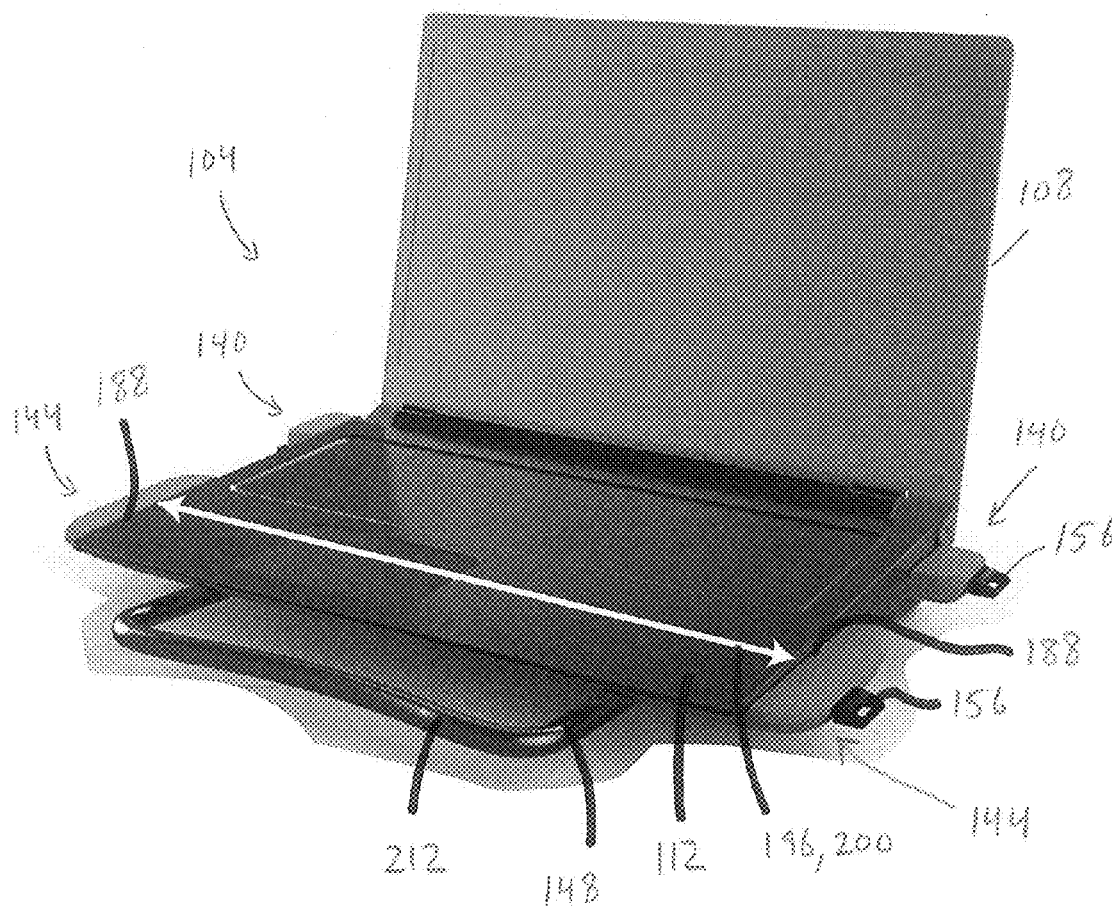


FIG. 3

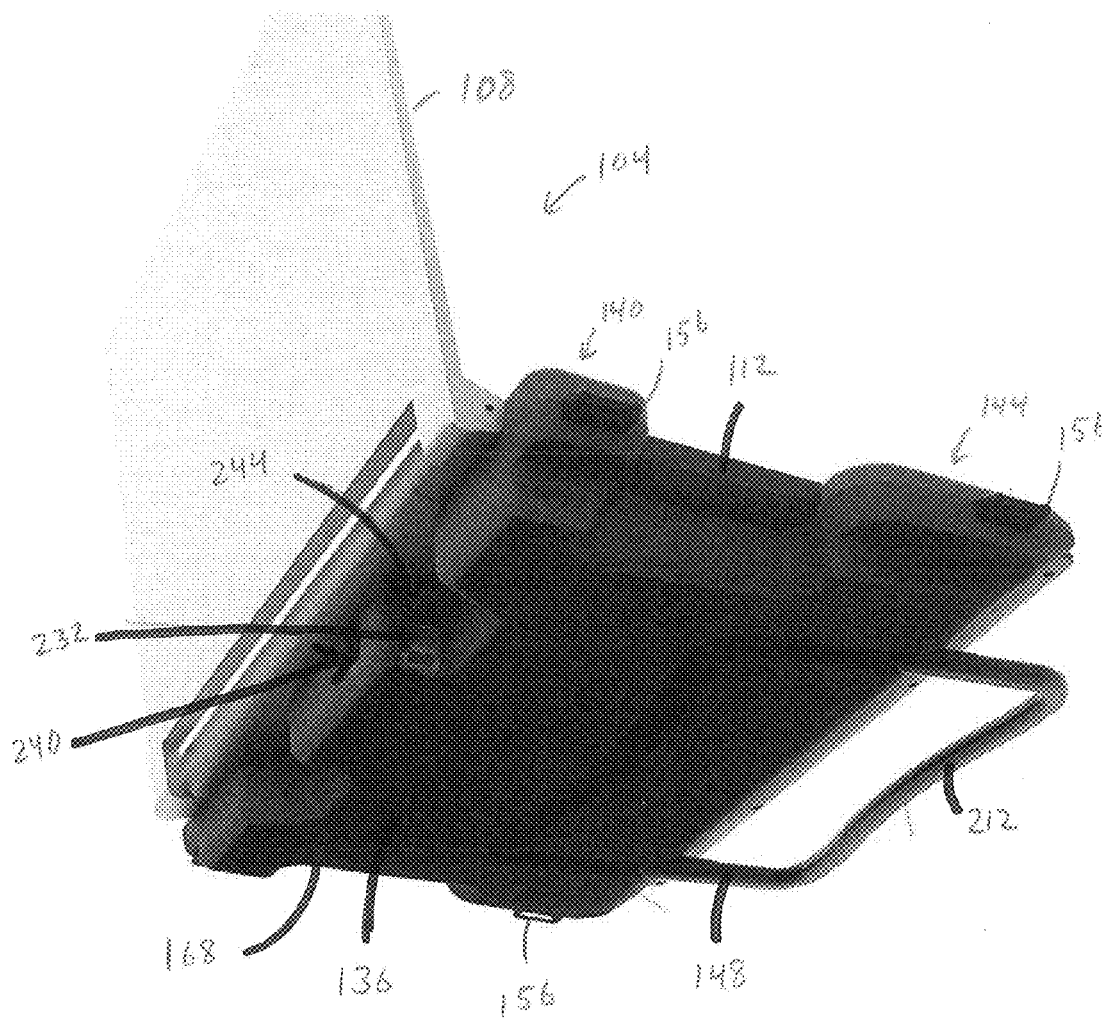


FIG. 4

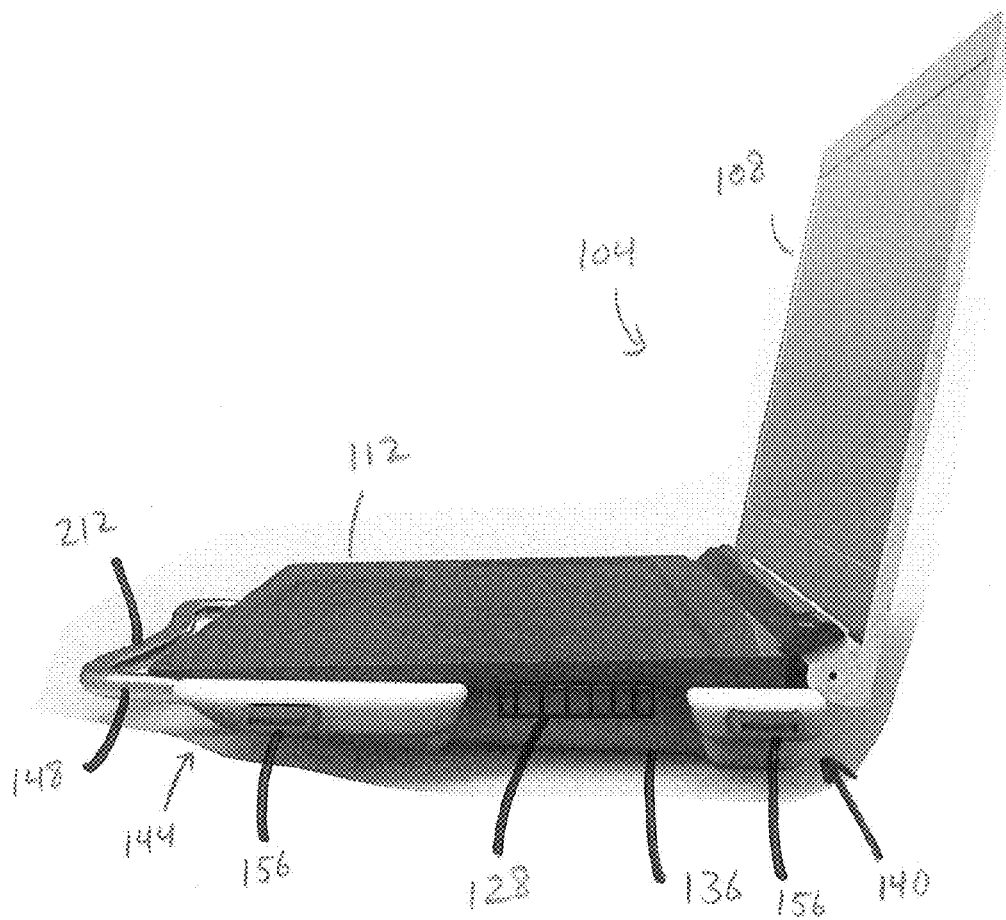


FIG. 5

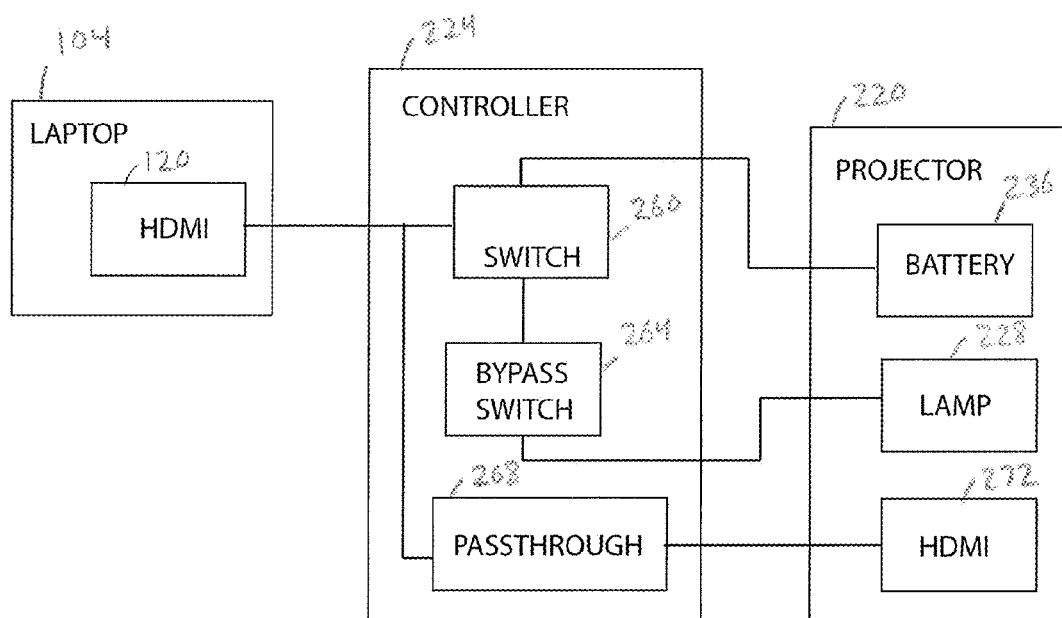
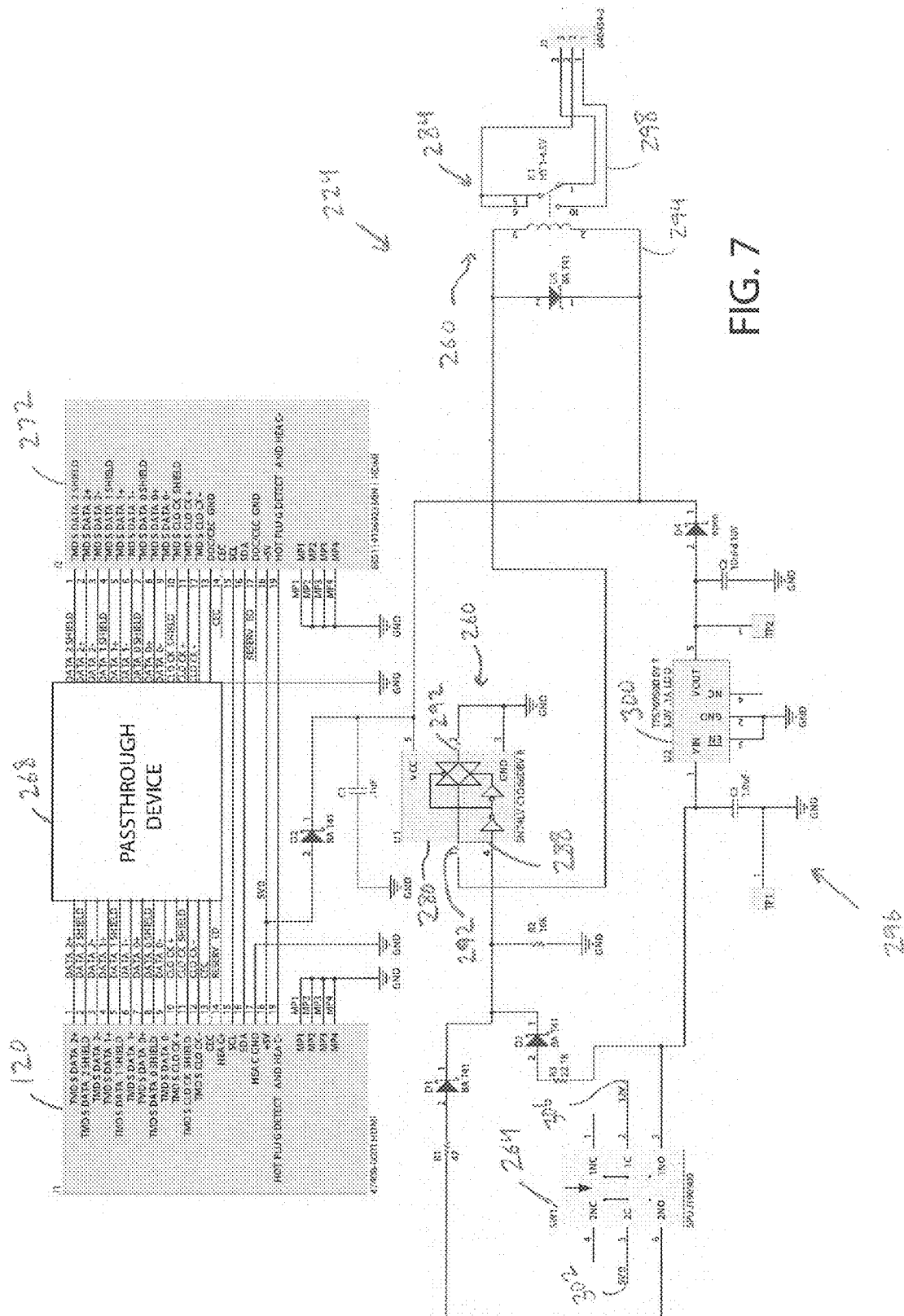


FIG. 6



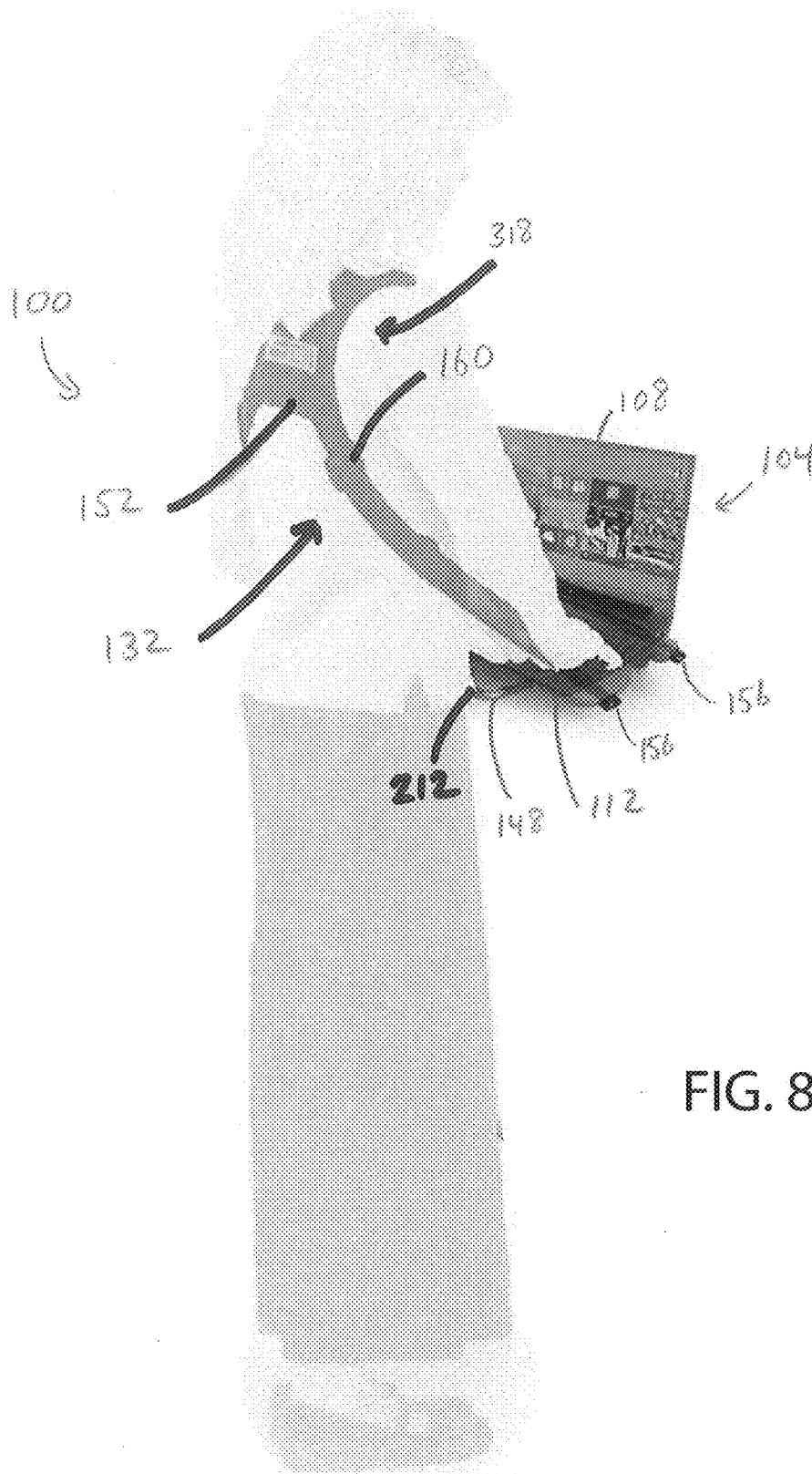


FIG. 8

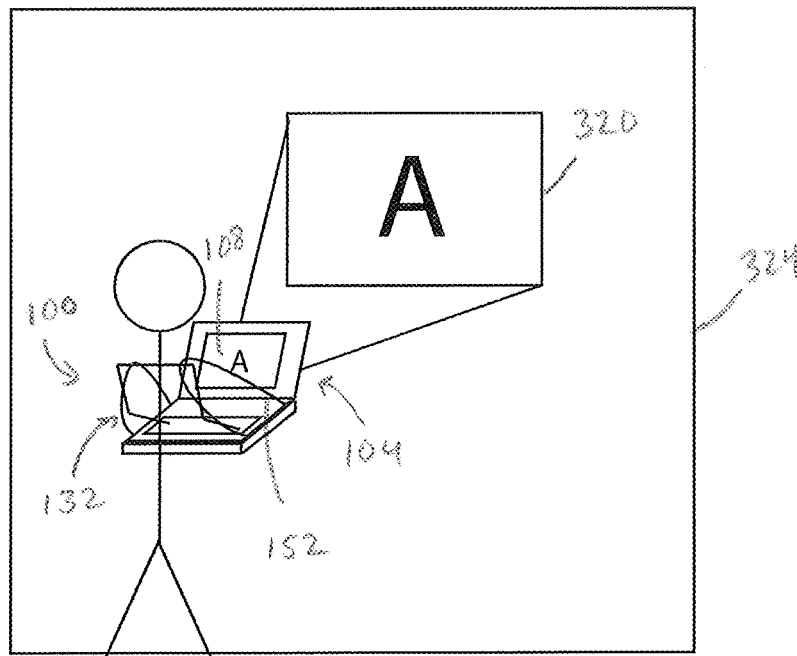


FIG. 9

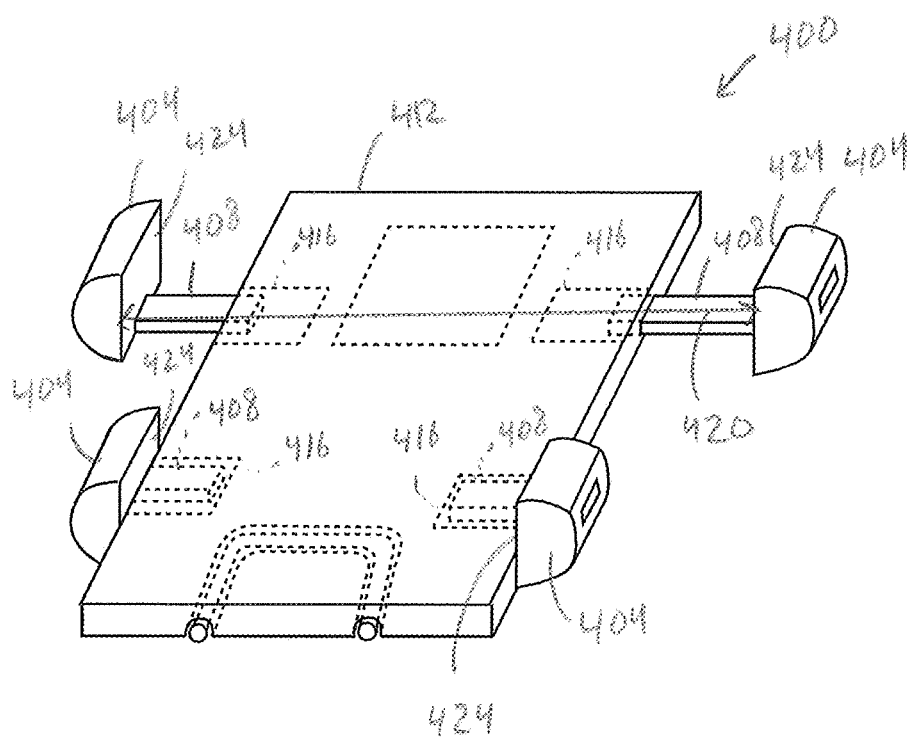


FIG. 10

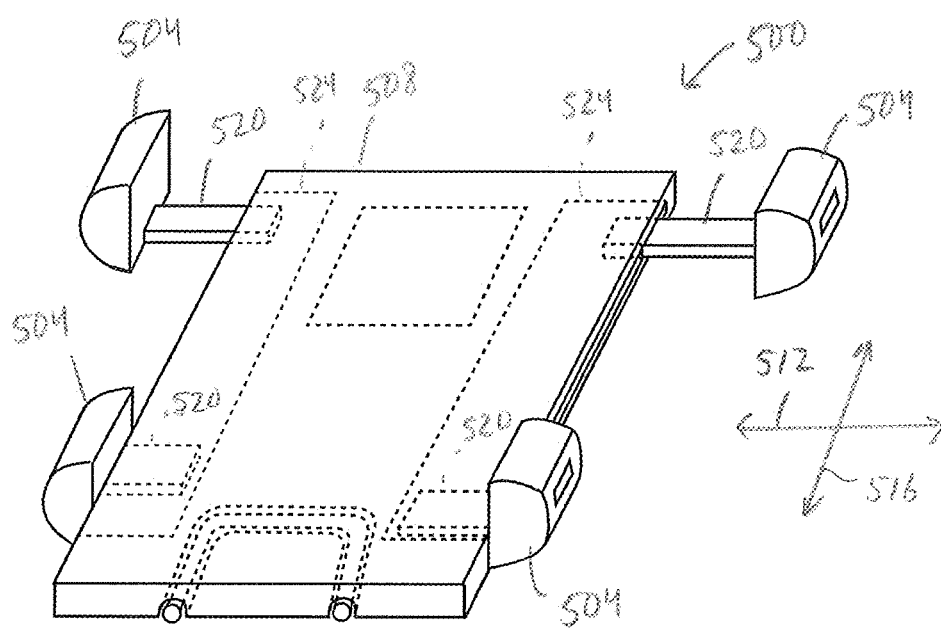


FIG. 11

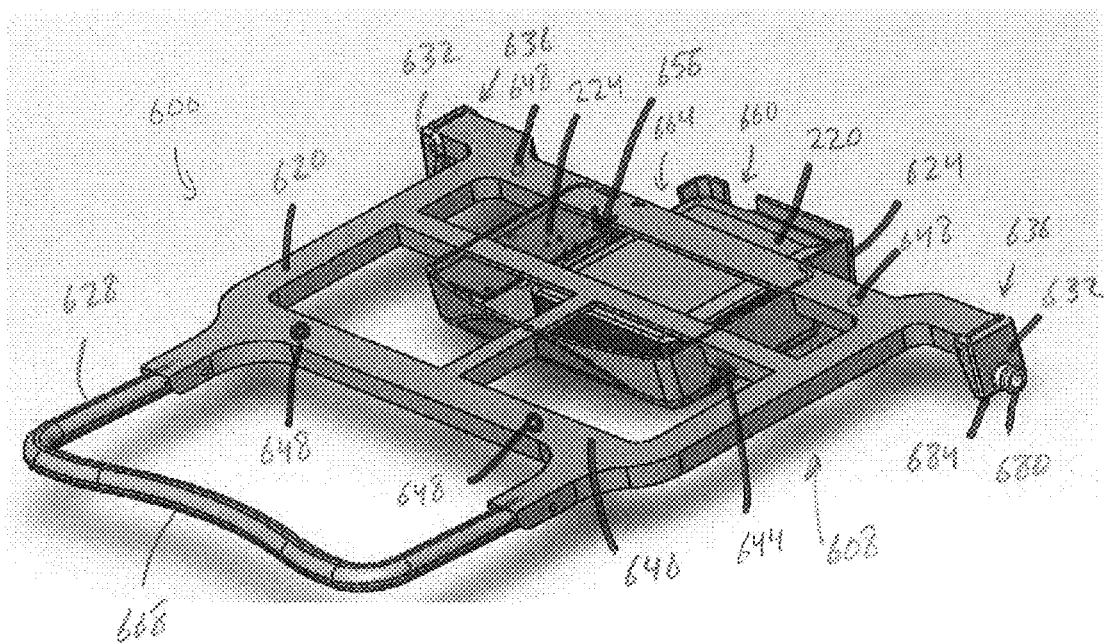
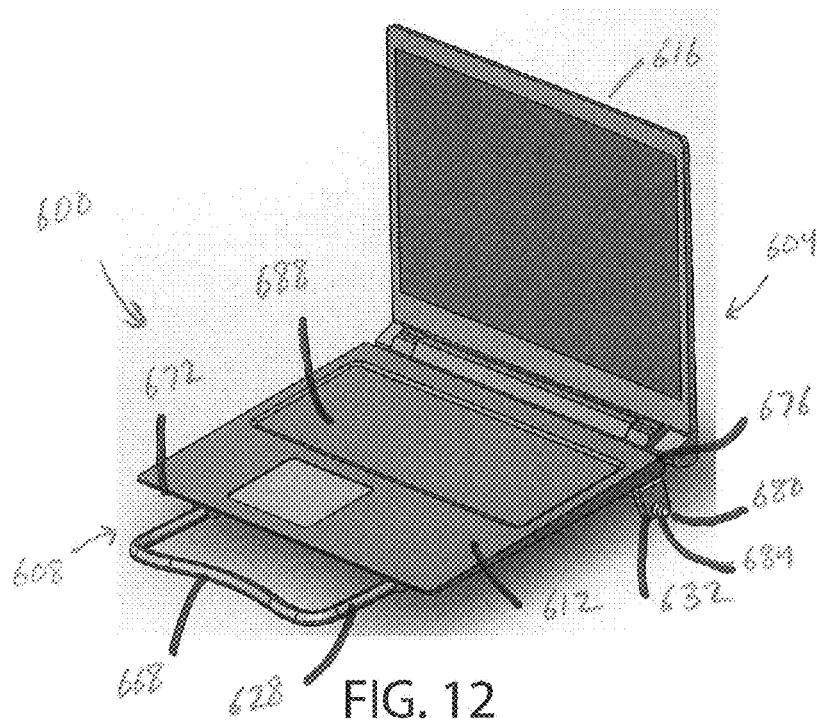


FIG. 13

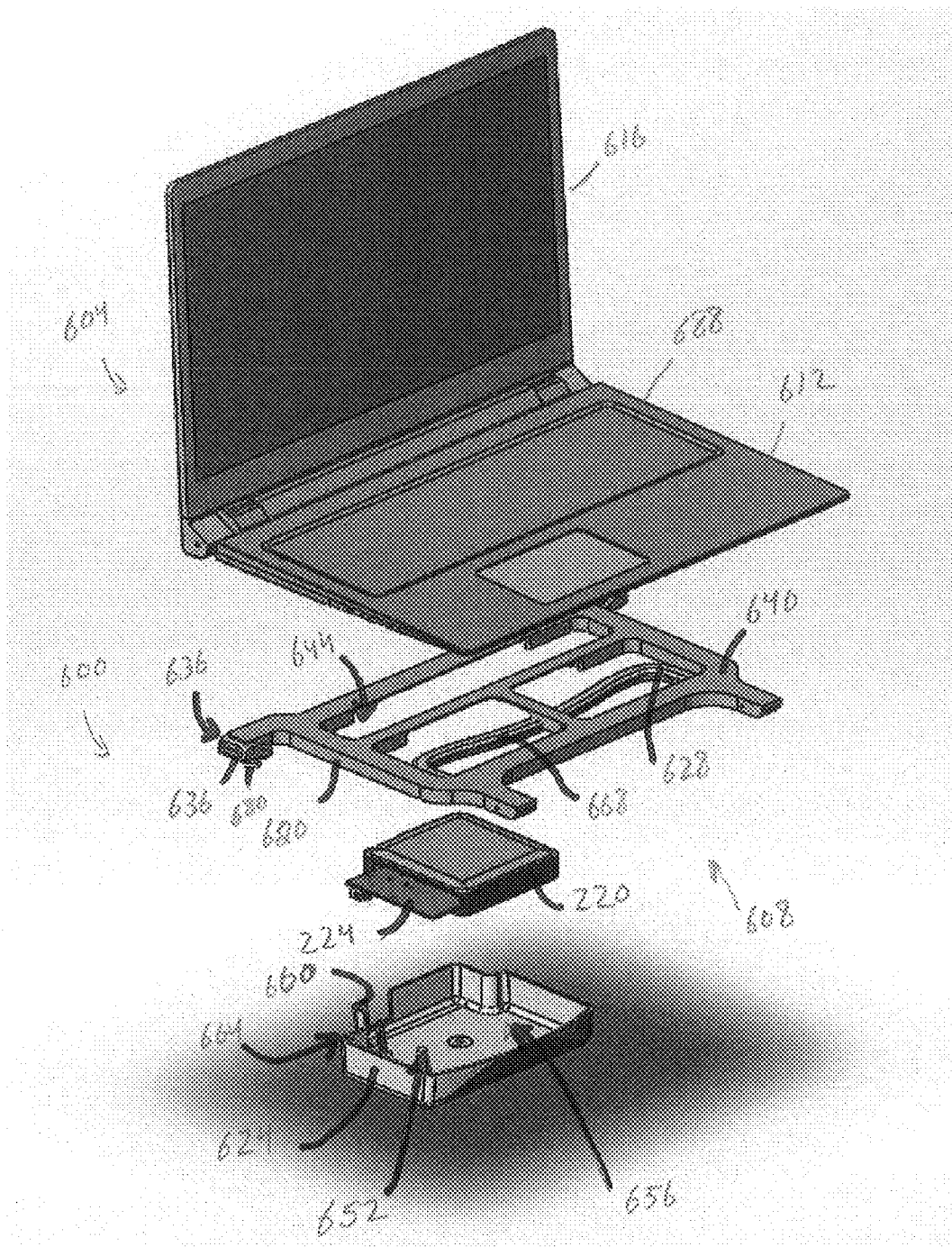
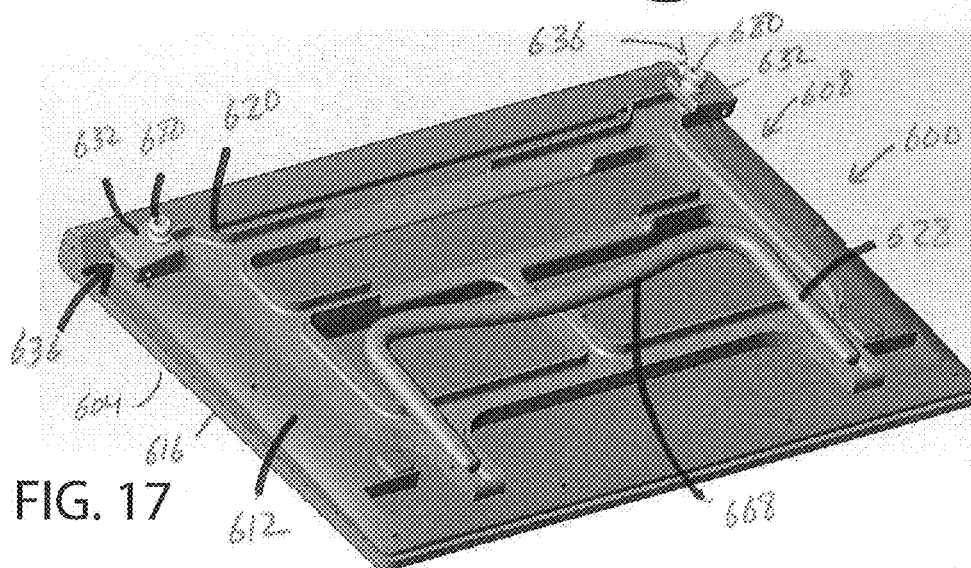
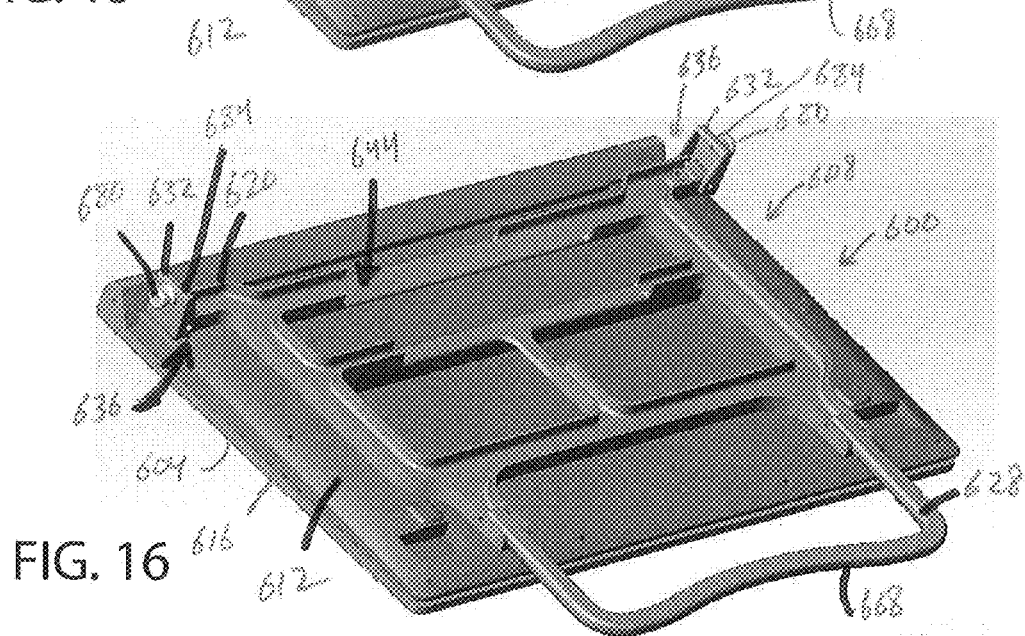
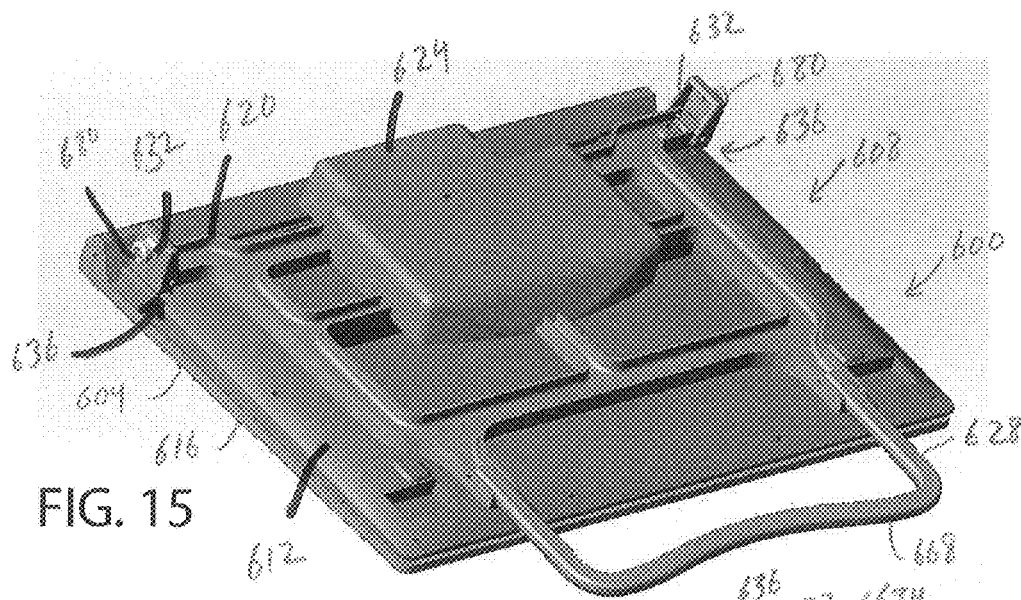


FIG. 14



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SUPPORT STRUCTURE ASSEMBLY FOR SUPPORTING A PORTABLE COMPUTING DEVICE

FIELD

This disclosure relates to portable computing devices and in particular to an assembly for supporting a portable computing device while the device is in use.

BACKGROUND

Portable computing devices, referred to herein as computers, portable computers, laptop computers, or laptops, typically include a base unit and a display screen that is pivotably connected to the base unit. The base unit contains a central processing unit ("CPU"), memory, a battery, and a keyboard. The display screen displays information processed by the CPU, while the keyboard is an input device for inputting and manipulating data. A mouse or other input device is typically connectable to the base unit as a further input device.

Laptops are used by technicians and professionals across a wide range of industries. For example, some medical professionals maintain electronic patient charts and use laptops to access and update the patient charts during a patient visit. The typical medical professional may carry the laptop into the exam room and then place the laptop on a table, desk, countertop, or other support surface during use of the device. Depending on the facility, however, a suitable support surface may be unavailable, thereby making use of the laptop extremely inconvenient. Moreover, in some cases the professional needs to be near the patient without any suitable support surface. In such a situation, the medical professional must support the base of the laptop with one hand and then type or enter data using the other hand. Most professionals prefer to type with two hands and, as a result, data entry errors and a reduction in efficiency occurs when professionals are forced to type with one hand. Of course, professionals in many other fields also benefit from laptops, and are at times without a suitable support surface to place the laptop.

As an additional issue, unlike the monitor of a desktop computer, the display screen of some laptops is difficult for both an operator and an onlooker to observe, since the display screen is typically small and located close to the keyboard in a position that is only convenient for the operator. As a result, it can be difficult for two professionals to collaborate on a project shown on the display screen. Further, it is inconvenient for an onlooker to verify the data that has been entered into the laptop by the operator. In this situation, typically the operator must stop entering data, rotate the laptop towards the onlooker, wait for confirmation from the onlooker, and then move the laptop back into data entry position. Clearly, this process leads to inefficiencies and may result in damage to the laptop during the periods of rotation and movement.

Based on the above, a need exists to make laptops and other portable computing devices even more efficient for use by professionals, technicians, and other users.

SUMMARY

According to an exemplary embodiment of the disclosure, a support structure assembly for supporting a portable computing device includes a harness assembly, a platform, two first step structures, and a support bar. The harness assembly includes a strap and a plurality of connectors extending from the strap. The platform defines a first support surface configured to support the computing device. The two first step

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structures extend from the platform and are located at opposite ends of the first support surface. Each first step structure defines a first socket formed in a first outer step surface and is configured to releasably retain a connector of the plurality of connectors. Each first step structure also defines a second support surface opposite from the first outer step surface, non-coplanar with the first support surface, and configured to support the computing device. The support bar is connected to the platform.

According to another exemplary embodiment of the disclosure, a support structure assembly for supporting a portable computing device includes a frame, a support bar, a cartridge assembly, a plurality of attachment assemblies, and a harness assembly. The frame defines a support surface configured to support the computing device and includes a first connection structure located opposite of the support surface. The support bar is connected to the frame. The cartridge assembly includes a second connection structure configured to be releasably retained by the first connection structure to connect the cartridge assembly to the frame. The cartridge assembly defines an accessory cavity configured to receive an accessory for use with the computing device. The plurality of attachment assemblies extends from the frame, and each attachment assembly includes an attachment structure. The harness assembly includes a strap and a plurality of connectors extending from the strap. Each connector is configured to be releasably retained by a corresponding attachment structure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

The above-described features and advantages, as well as others, should become more readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art by reference to the following detailed description and the accompanying figures in which:

FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a support structure assembly and a portable computing device, the support structure assembly includes a platform, a harness that is shown disconnected from the platform, and a support bar that is shown in an extended position, the computing device is shown positioned above the platform;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of the support structure assembly of FIG. 1 with the harness shown connected to the platform and the support bar shown in a retracted position;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the support structure assembly of FIG. 1 showing the computing device supported on the platform;

FIG. 4 is a rear perspective view of the support structure assembly of FIG. 1 with the computing device supported on the platform and an undersurface of the platform being shown;

FIG. 5 is a side perspective view of the support structure assembly of FIG. 1 showing the computing device supported on the platform;

FIG. 6 is a block diagram view of the computing device and also a power controller and a video projector assembly of the support structure assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 7 is a schematic showing selected electrical circuits of the computing device, the power controller, and the video projector assembly;

FIG. 8 is a rear perspective view showing the support structure assembly and the computing device in use;

FIG. 9 is a perspective view showing the support structure assembly and the computing device in use and projecting an image on a nearby surface;

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FIG. 10 is a perspective view of another embodiment of a support structure assembly including step structures for supporting a laptop that are adjustable in position along an axis;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of yet another embodiment of a support structure assembly including step structures for supporting a laptop that are adjustable in position along two axes;

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of a further embodiment of a support structure assembly and a portable computing device supported by the support structure assembly;

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the support structure assembly of FIG. 12 showing a frame, a support bar in an extended position, and a cartridge assembly connected to the frame, a video projector assembly and a power controller are supported by the cartridge assembly;

FIG. 14 is an exploded perspective view of the support structure assembly and the computing device of FIG. 12;

FIG. 15 is a bottom perspective view of the support structure assembly and the computing device of FIG. 12 with the support bar in the extended position and two attachment assemblies in an extended position;

FIG. 16 is another bottom perspective view of the support structure assembly and the computing device of FIG. 12 with the cartridge assembly removed from the frame; and

FIG. 17 is yet another bottom perspective view of the support structure assembly and the computing device of FIG. 12 with the cartridge assembly removed from the frame and the support bar in a retracted position.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

For the purpose of promoting an understanding of the principles of the disclosure, reference will now be made to the embodiments illustrated in the drawings and described in the following written specification. It is understood that no limitation to the scope of the disclosure is thereby intended. It is further understood that this disclosure includes any alterations and modifications to the illustrated embodiments and includes further applications of the principles of the disclosure as would normally occur to one skilled in the art to which this disclosure pertains.

As shown in FIG. 1, a support structure assembly 100 is configured to support a portable computing device 104, which in the exemplary embodiments is a laptop. The laptop 104 includes a display screen 108 pivotably connected to a base unit 112. The display screen 108 is configured to display data generated by components within the base unit 112. The base unit 112 includes a central processing unit ("CPU") (not shown), memory (not shown), an input device such as a keyboard 116, and output ports such a video output and an audio output. In one embodiment, the video output and audio output are included in a high-definition multimedia interface ("HDMI") port 120. In other embodiments, the video output is provided as any desired output such as a video graphics array ("VGA") port or a digital visual interface ("DVI") port, and the audio output is provided as a socket 124 configured to receive a phone connector. The base unit 112 defines at least one air vent 128 configured to exhaust an airflow used for cooling the CPU.

The support structure assembly 100 is configured to conveniently support the laptop 104 for the user, even when a table, desk, countertop, or other support surface is unavailable. The support structure assembly 100 includes a harness assembly 132, a platform 136, two rear step structures 140, two front step structures 144, and a support bar 148. The harness assembly 132 includes a strap 152 and a plurality of connectors 156 extending from the strap. The strap 152 is

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flexible and is shaped and sized for support by the upper body of a user. For example, the strap 152 may be configured for support by the user's shoulders and/or neck. The strap 152 may also include a length adjustment feature 160 (FIG. 8) so that the user can select a desired length of the strap. The strap 152 is formed from nylon, cotton, or any other desired material(s) that is strong and durable enough to support a laptop computer. The connectors 156 are attached to the strap 152 and are configured for connection to the step structures 140, 144, as described below.

With continued reference to FIG. 1, the platform 136 defines a first laptop support surface 164, an opposite undersurface 168, and a cavity 172. The support surface 164 is generally planar and is approximately the same size as the base unit 112 of the laptop 104. In some embodiments, the support surface 164 defines a plurality of ribs or ridges 176 extending at least partially across the support surface to promote airflow between the base unit 112 and the platform 136. The platform 136 is typically formed from rigid plastic or metal, such as aluminum, or other suitably rigid but lightweight material.

The cavity 172 is located between the support surface 164 and the undersurface 168. The cavity 172 is configured to receive accessories for use with the laptop, as described below. In one embodiment, a removable cover plate 180 is connected to the platform 136 and is configured to cover at least a portion of the cavity 172 and the accessory(ies) contained therein.

The step structures 140, 144 extend from the platform 136 and are configured to further align and support the laptop 104. The rear step structures 140 are located at opposite ends of the support surface 164 from each other. The front step structures 144 are also located at opposite ends of the support surface 164 from each other and are spaced apart from the rear step structures 148, such that the vent 128 of the laptop 104 is unobstructed when the laptop is supported by the platform 136 (see FIG. 5).

Each step structure 140, 144 defines a socket 184 and a support surface 188. The sockets 184 are formed in an outer step surface 192 of the step structures 140, 144. As shown in FIG. 2, each socket 184 is configured to releasably retain one of the connectors 156 of the harness assembly 132. Accordingly, each socket 184 defines a detent (not shown) or other feature configured to releasably retain the connectors 156. It is understood that the connectors 156 and the sockets 184 can have varied configurations that permit firm engagement and easy disengagement.

The support surfaces 188 defined by the step structures 140, 144 are opposite from the outer step surfaces 192 and are non-coplanar with the support surface 164 defined by the platform 136. In particular, the support surfaces 188 extend above the support surface 164 so that the laptop 104 is prevented from moving laterally on the platform 136. As shown in FIG. 3, in one embodiment, a distance 196 between the support surfaces 188 is approximately the same as a width 200 (FIG. 3) of the base unit 112 so that the laptop 108 is gripped between the step structures 140, 144. The support surfaces 188 of the step structures 140, 144 may be coated with a high friction coating to further prevent movement of the base unit 112. Also, in another embodiment, additional step structures (not shown) may extend from a rear side 204 (FIG. 1) and/or a front side 208 (FIG. 1) of the platform 136 and define additional support surfaces (not shown) configured to further prevent movement of the laptop 104 relative to the platform 136.

As shown in FIGS. 1 through 4, the support bar 148 includes a support member 212 and is movably connected to

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the platform 136. In particular, the support bar 148 is configured for movement relative to the platform 136 to an extended position (FIGS. 1, 3, and 4) and a retracted position (FIG. 2, shown partially in phantom). In the retracted position, the support member 212 is configured to be received by a bar recess 216 (shown without the support bar in FIG. 4) that is defined in the undersurface 168 of the platform 136. The bar recess 216 is approximately the same size and shape as the support bar 148. Accordingly, in the retracted position the support member 212 is positioned between the undersurface 168 and the support surface 164. In the extended position, the support member 212 is spaced apart from the bar recess 216. In some embodiments, the bar recess 216 defines a detent (not shown) or other feature that is configured to releasably retain the support bar 148 in the bar recess 216. In the illustrated embodiment, the support bar 148 is pivotably mounted to the platform 136. However, it is contemplated that other engagements may be used such as a sliding engagement.

The cavity 172 of the platform 136 is configured to receive and support accessories for use with the laptop 104. For example, as shown in FIG. 1, a video projector assembly 220 and a power controller 224 are at least partially positioned in the cavity 172 for support by the platform 136. The video projector assembly 220 is preferably provided as a pico-projector or other “handheld” projector unit including a lamp assembly 228, a focus adjustment mechanism 232 (FIG. 4), and a battery 236 (FIG. 6). The video projector assembly 220 is electrically connectable to the laptop 104 to receive an electrical audio/video signal generated by the laptop. The lamp assembly 228, which is powered by the battery 236, is configured to project an image through an image aperture 240 (FIG. 4) formed in the platform 136. The image aperture 240 is configured to enable the projected image (e.g. a light beam) generated by the video projector assembly 220 to pass through the platform 136 without obstruction. The focus adjustment mechanism 232 is accessible through a focus opening 244 (FIG. 4) defined by the platform 136 to enable focusing of the projected image when the video projector assembly 220 is positioned within the cavity 172. The video projector assembly 220 is configurable to project the same image as displayed on the display screen 108 of the laptop 104. Also, the video projector assembly 220 is configurable to project any desired image including images that are different than what is displayed by the display screen 108. The video projector assembly 220 is connectable to the HDMI port 120 via a suitable cable.

The power controller 224 is also electrically connectable to the HDMI port 120 and the video projector assembly 220. The power controller 224 is configured to automatically activate the video projector assembly 220 when the display screen 108 is in use. In particular, the power controller 224 is configured to supply electrical power from the battery 236 to the lamp assembly 228 in response to detecting that the display screen 108 is active. Furthermore, the power controller 224 is configured to electrically isolate the lamp assembly 228 from the battery 236 in response to detecting that the display screen 108 is inactive. Thus, the power controller 224 is operable to automatically “wake” the video projector assembly 220 when the display screen 108 is in use and to automatically cause the video projector assembly to enter “sleep” or stand-by mode when the display screen is inactive. The power controller 224 is further configured to prevent the video projector assembly 220 from drawing electrical power from the battery 236 when the display screen 108 is inactive, such that the video projector assembly efficiently utilizes the electrical energy stored in the battery.

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An embodiment of the power controller 224 is shown in the block diagram of FIG. 6. The power controller 224 is shown as including a switch 260, a bypass switch 264, and a passthrough device 268. The switch 260 is an electrically controllable switch that is configurable in an open state or a closed state. The bypass switch 264 is a user-operated switch (manually operated) that is configurable in an open state or a closed state. The passthrough device 268 is configured to pass signals between the HDMI port 120 and an HDMI port 272 of the video projector assembly 220.

Certain pins of the HDMI port 120 of the laptop 104 are connected to the switch 260 as a control signal. Certain other pins of the HDMI port 120 of the laptop 104 are connected to the passthrough device 268, which is connected to the HDMI port 272 of the video projector assembly 220. The battery 236, the switch 260, the bypass switch 264, and the lamp assembly 228 are connected in series.

An exemplary circuit implementation of the power controller 224 is shown in the schematic of FIG. 7, which illustrates the HDMI port 120 of the laptop 104, the HDMI port 272 of the video projector assembly 220, the switch 260, the bypass switch 264, and the passthrough device 268. The switch 260 is implemented with an analog switch 280 and an electromechanical relay 284. The analog switch 280 is provided as a Texas Instruments SN74LVC1G66, which includes a control input 288 and two switched pins 292. The electromechanical relay 284 includes a coil circuit 294 and a switched circuit 298. The bypass switch 264 is provided as a double-pole push switch that is connected to a 5V voltage source 302.

Pin 18 of the HDMI port 120 is energized when the display screen 108 is energized and is configured to supply power to the analog switch 280 and is connected to the coil circuit 294 of the electromechanical relay 284. From the coil circuit 294 the signal from pin 18 is connected to one of the switched pins 292 (left pin in FIG. 7) of the analog switch 280. The other switched pin 292 (right pin in FIG. 7) is connected to ground.

Next, starting from the voltage source 302 connected to the bypass switch 264, the voltage source 302 is selectively connectable to one of the switched pins (pin 6 in FIG. 7) of the bypass switch. From the bypass switch 264, the voltage source 302 is connected to the control input 288 of the analog switch 280.

The closed bypass switch 264 is configured to supply the control input 288 with a voltage signal from the voltage source 302 that causes the analog switch 280 to close, thereby electrically connecting the switched pins 292. In response to the closing of the analog switch 280, the coil circuit 294 is energized and the switched circuit 298 becomes configured to supply the lamp 228 (FIG. 6) of the video projector assembly 220 with electrical energy from the battery 236 (FIG. 6).

When the bypass switch 264 is in the open state, the voltage source 302 is isolated from the control input 288 and the analog switch 280 is in the open state (i.e. the switched pins 292 are electrically isolated). Accordingly, the switched circuit 298 is configured to isolate the lamp 228 (FIG. 6) of the video projector assembly 220 from the electrical energy of the battery 236 (FIG. 6) even when pin 18 of the HDMI port 120 is not energized.

The schematic of FIG. 7 also illustrates a circuit 296 that enables the lamp 228 of the video projector assembly 220 to be supplied with electrical power from the battery 236 even when the display screen 108 of the laptop 104 is inactive. This optional circuit 296 is typically used to activate the video projector assembly 220 when the battery 236 is being charged, for example. The circuit 296 includes a low-dropout

(LDO) voltage regulator **300** provided as a Texas Instruments TPS76950, and a charging voltage source **306** connected to the bypass switch **264**.

Starting from the voltage source **306**, when the bypass switch is closed, the control input **288** and an input (pin **1**) of the voltage regulator **300** are supplied with electrical energy from the voltage source **306**. The voltage regulator **300** outputs a regulated voltage (5V typically) that supplies power to the analog switch **280** and is connected to the coil circuit **294**. From the coil circuit **294** the output of the voltage regulator **300** is connected to one of the switched pins **292** (left pin in FIG. 7) of the analog switch **280**. The other switched pin **292** (right pin in FIG. 7) is connected to ground.

Accordingly, when the bypass switch **264** is closed and a charging voltage (i.e. voltage source **306**) is present at the bypass switch, the voltage regulator **300** is configured to generate an output voltage signal that is used to power to analog switch **260** and to activate the electromechanical relay **284** even when the 5V signal (pin **18**) is unavailable from the HDMI port **120** of the laptop **104** (such as when the display screen **108** is inactive). When the charging voltage is not present at the bypass switch **264**, the output of the voltage regulator **300** is zero volts and the electromechanical relay **284** is configured to remain open.

In addition to the video projector assembly **220** other accessories are configured to be positioned in the cavity **172** such as a loudspeaker assembly **304** (FIG. 2) and/or a digital camera assembly **308** (FIG. 2). The loudspeaker assembly **304** is supported by the platform **136** and is located at least partially in the cavity **172**. The loudspeaker assembly **304** includes an electrical amplifier **312** and at least two loudspeaker units **316** electrically connected to the amplifier. The amplifier **312** is configured for electrical connection to the audio socket **124** (FIG. 1) of the laptop **104** and is configured to receive and to amplify an electrical audio signal.

The digital camera **308** is supported by the platform **136** and is at least partially located in the cavity **172**. The digital camera **308** is configured to take images through the image aperture **240** (FIG. 4) in the platform **136**. The digital camera **308** is electrically connectable to a universal serial bus ("USB") port (not shown) of the laptop **104**, for example.

As shown in FIGS. 8 and 9, in operation the support structure assembly **100** enables convenient use of the laptop **104** and the video projector assembly **220** when the user is sitting or standing and is away from a support surface, such as a table, desk, or countertop. In FIG. 8, the user has connected the connectors **156** of the harness assembly **132** to the sockets **184** of the step structures **140**, **144**. The user has also positioned openings **318** defined by the strap **152** of the harness assembly **132** about her shoulders. The laptop **104** is shown as being supported by the support surfaces **164**, **188**. The support bar **148** is positioned against a midsection of the user to position the keyboard **116** at a comfortable and ergonomic location. The user is able to support the laptop **104** without using her hands so that her hands are available for using input devices connected to the laptop (i.e. the keyboard **104**) or other devices. The user is able to walk about with the support structure assembly **110** and the laptop **104**, and even traverse difficult terrain (e.g. in an outdoor environment) all without supporting the laptop with her hands, since the support surfaces **164**, **188** maintain the laptop in a fixed position relative to the platform **136**. During use the laptop **104** is able to cool the CPU, since the step structures **140**, **144** are spaced apart from any vents **128** of the laptop.

In FIG. 9, the user has activated the video projector assembly **220** and has displayed a projected image **320** on a nearby flat surface, such as a wall **324**. Accordingly, the user is able

to easily display information for another person or even a group of people without requiring those people to view the display screen **108**, which is relatively small and may be inconveniently oriented for viewing by people other than the user. In one embodiment, the output of the video projector assembly **220** can be made as large as about eighty inches on the diagonal and full high-definition video (1080P) may be displayed. The video projector assembly **220** is useful for medical assistants that may desire to update a patient's chart while the patient and/or a doctor are speaking. The user does not require a separate support surface and may choose to display the data being entered on a nearby wall for approval and proofing by the doctor and/or the patient. However, it can be appreciated that the platform **136** is configured to rest on a separate support surface as desired. To that end, the under-surface **168** may be provided with pads or feet (not shown).

As shown in FIG. 10, in another embodiment of the support structure assembly **400**, step structures **404** extend from support members **408** that are movably received by a platform **412**. In particular, each support member **408** is positionable within a corresponding cavity **416** formed in the platform **412**. A corresponding set screw (not shown) or like fastener may be provided to fix the position of each support member **408** relative to the platform **412**. In the illustrated embodiment, the step structures **404** are movable relative to the platform **412** such that a distance **420** between support surfaces **424** is selectable, thereby making the support structure assembly **400** usable with an even greater number of laptops. Specifically, the distance **420** is selectable to correspond to the width **200** (FIG. 3) of the laptop **104** such that a laptop of any typically available width is supportable on the platform **136**.

With reference to FIG. 11, in yet another embodiment of the support structure assembly **500**, step structures **504** are movable relative to a platform **508** about two axes **512**, **516**. As in the embodiment of FIG. 10, the step structures **504** extend from support members **520** that are movably received by the platform **508**. In the embodiment of FIG. 11, cavities **524** are formed that are much wider than the support members **520**, such that the support members are movable about the axis **512** and the axis **516** that is perpendicular to the axis **512**. Each support member **520** is fixedly positionable in any position within the corresponding cavity **524**.

The step structures **504** are positionable about the axis **512** to accommodate laptops of any typically available width **200** (FIG. 3). Additionally, the step structures **504** are positionable about the axis **516** to ensure that the step structures **504** are spaced apart from any vents **128**, ports **120**, **124**, disk drives, and the like that may be formed on the base unit **112** of the laptop **104**.

As shown in FIGS. 12-14, another embodiment of the support structure assembly **600** includes a laptop **604** and a support structure **608**. The laptop **604** is substantially identical to the laptop **104** and includes all of the same parts, components, and features including a base unit **612** and a display screen **616**. The support structure **608** includes a harness assembly (not shown, substantially identical to the harness assembly **132** (FIG. 1)), a frame **620**, a cartridge assembly **624**, a support bar **628**, a plurality of attachment assemblies **632**, a plurality of hinge structures **636**, the video projector assembly **220**, and the power controller **224**.

With reference to FIG. 13, the frame **620** defines a support surface **640** and includes a connection structure **644**. The support surface **640** is configured to support the base unit **612** of the laptop **104**. In particular, the frame **620** is configured to be fixedly connected to the base unit **612** of the laptop **604**. In one embodiment, the frame **620** defines openings **648**, each

configured to receive a fastener (not shown) that extends through a corresponding opening **648** and into a corresponding opening (not shown) formed in the base unit **612** of the laptop **604**. Accordingly, the frame **620** is connectable to any laptop independent of the width **200** (FIG. **3**) or size of the base unit **612**. In other embodiments, the frame **620** is integrally formed with the base unit **612** as a monolithic part, the frame is attached to the base unit with an adhesive, or the frame connected to the base unit with any desired structure and process.

As shown in FIG. **14**, the cartridge assembly **624** includes a connection structure **652** and defines an accessory cavity **656**, an image aperture **660**, and a focus opening **664**. The connection structure **652** is configured to be releasably retained by the connection structure **644** of the frame **620** to connect the cartridge assembly **624** to the frame. The connection structures **644**, **652** are provided as any desired type of connection structures. Additionally, fasteners (not shown) may extend through the cartridge assembly **624** and into the frame **620** to connect the cartridge assembly to the frame. The cartridge assembly **624** is shown disconnected from the frame **620** in FIGS. **14**, **16**, and **17** and is shown connected to the frame in FIGS. **13** and **15**. In one embodiment, a lock assembly (not shown) is provided that prevents disconnection of the cartridge assembly **624** from the frame **620** without a key or other release mechanism (not shown).

The accessory cavity **656** is configured to receive and to support an accessory, such as any accessory for use with the laptop. As shown in FIG. **13**, the video projector assembly **220** and the power controller **224** are positionable in the accessory cavity **656**. Additionally, the loudspeaker assembly **304** and/or the digital camera **308** are positioned in the accessory cavity **656**. When the cartridge assembly **624** is connected to the frame **620**, the accessory cavity **656** is defined in part by the cartridge assembly, in part by the frame, and in part by the base unit **612** of the laptop **604**. Typically, the accessories within the accessory cavity **656** are not removable from the accessory cavity when the cartridge assembly **624** is connected to the frame **620**.

The image aperture **660** is an opening formed in the cartridge assembly **624** that is configured to align with the lamp assembly **228** of the video projector assembly **220** when the video projector assembly is positioned in the accessory cavity **656** and the cartridge assembly is connected to the frame **620**. The image aperture **660** enables the image projected by the lamp assembly **228** to exit the accessory cavity **656**.

The focus opening **664** is an opening formed in the cartridge assembly **624** through which the focus adjustment mechanism **232** of the video projector assembly **220** is accessible to a user when the video projector assembly is positioned in the accessory cavity **656** and the cartridge assembly is connected to the frame **620**. The focus opening **664** is configured to enable a user to access the focus adjustment mechanism **232** of the video projector assembly **220** so that the projected image is easily focused.

The support bar **628** is connected to the frame **620** and is configured for movement between an extended position (FIGS. **12**, **13**, **15**, and **16**) and a retracted position (FIGS. **14** and **17**). The support bar **628**, which is substantially identical to the support bar **148**, includes a support member **668**. In the extended position the support member **668** is positioned in front of a front edge **672** (FIG. **12**) and a rear edge **676** (FIG. **12**) of the laptop **604**, so that the support member is positionable against the midsection of the user. In the retracted position the support member **668** is positioned between the front edge **672** and the rear edge **676**.

As shown in FIG. **13**, the attachment assemblies **632** extend from the frame **620** and each includes an attachment structure **680** that is configured to releasably retain a corresponding connector **156** of the harness assembly **132**.

The hinge structures **636** are each connected to the frame **620** and to a corresponding one of the attachment assemblies **632**. The hinge structures **636** are configured to enable movement of each attachment assembly **632** to an extended position (FIGS. **12**, **13**, **15**, and **16**) and a retracted position (FIGS. **14** and **17**). In the extended position, a ground engaging surface **684** (FIG. **13**) of each attachment assembly **632** is configured to support the frame **620** in a position that makes use of a keyboard **688** of the laptop **604** ergonomic and comfortable. Also, in the extended position, the attachment structures **680** are available for connection to the connectors **156** of the harness assembly **132**. The attachment assemblies **632** are also useful for adjusting the height of the projected image. That is, the projected image is raised when the attachment assemblies **632** are in the extended position, and the projected image is lowered when the attachment assemblies are in the retracted position.

While the disclosure has been illustrated and described in detail in the drawings and foregoing description, the same should be considered as illustrative and not restrictive in character. It is understood that only the preferred embodiments have been presented and that all changes, modifications and further applications that come within the spirit of the disclosure are desired to be protected.

What is claimed is:

1. A support structure assembly for supporting a portable computing device comprising: a harness assembly including a strap and a plurality of connectors extending from said strap; a platform defining a first support surface configured to support the portable computing device; two first step structures extending from said platform and located at opposite ends of said first support surface, each first step structure defining (i) a first socket formed in a first outer step surface and configured to releasably retain a connector of said plurality of connectors, and (ii) a second support surface opposite from said first outer step surface, non-coplanar with said first support surface, and configured to support the portable computing device; and a support bar connected to said platform; the support structure assembly, further comprising: two second step structures extending from said platform, located at opposite ends of said first support surface, and spaced apart from said first step structures, each second step structure defining (i) a second socket formed in a second outer step surface and configured to releasably retain a connector of said plurality of connectors, and (ii) a third support surface opposite from said second outer step surface, non-coplanar with said first support surface, and configured to support the portable computing device; wherein at least one of said two first step structures is slidably movable relative to said platform, such that a first distance between said second support surfaces is selectable, and at least one of said two second step structures is slidably movable relative to said platform, such that a second distance between said third support surfaces is selectable.

2. The support structure assembly of claim 1, wherein: said platform defines an undersurface opposite said first support surface, and said platform further defines a cavity located between said first support surface and said undersurface.

3. The support structure assembly of claim 2, further comprising: a digital camera assembly supported by said platform, located at least partially in said cavity, and electrically connectable to an output of said portable computing device.

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4. The support structure assembly of claim 2, further comprising: a video projector assembly supported by said platform, located at least partially in said cavity, and configured to project a projected image through an image aperture in said platform, said video projector assembly electrically connectable to the portable computing device to receive an electrical video signal generated by the portable computing device.

5. The support structure assembly of claim 4, further comprising: a power controller supported by said platform and electrically connected to said video projector assembly and the portable computing device, said power controller configured to supply electrical power to a lamp assembly of said video projector assembly in response to detecting that a display screen of the portable computing device is active and to electrically isolate said lamp assembly from said electrical power in response to detecting that the display screen is inactive.

6. The support structure assembly of claim 5, wherein said electrical power is supplied by a battery supported by said video projector assembly.

7. The support structure assembly of claim 4, wherein: said video projector assembly includes a focus adjustment mechanism, and said platform defines a focus opening through which said focus adjustment mechanism is accessible to a user to enable focusing of said projected image when said video

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projector assembly is supported by said platform and located at least partially in said cavity.

8. The support structure assembly of claim 2, further comprising: a loudspeaker assembly supported by said platform, located at least partially in said cavity, and electrically connectable to said portable computing device to receive an electrical audio signal generated by the portable computing device.

9. The support structure assembly of claim 8, wherein: said loudspeaker assembly further includes an electrical amplifier assembly and at least two loudspeaker units electrically connected to said amplifier assembly, and said amplifier assembly is configured to receive and amplify said electrical audio signal.

10. The support structure assembly of claim 1, wherein: the support bar is configured for movement to an extended position and a retracted position,

in said retracted position a support member of said support bar is configured to be received by a bar recess defined by an undersurface of said platform located opposite of said first support surface, and said support member is positioned between said first support surface and said undersurface, and

in said extended position said support member is spaced apart from said bar recess.

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